

# My More-Than-#1ReasonWhy

Posted on [November 27, 2012](#) by [Tami Baribeau](#)

Trigger warning: *Slut-shaming of a minor, harassment.*

[A hashtag is going around Twitter](#) in which women and their allies are using #1ReasonWhy to explain why there aren't more women in the game industry. It's a sobering and very personal look at the experiences that women in games have suffered through and continue to deal with on a daily basis in exchange for working in a field they feel passionate about. I contributed a few tweets to it, mostly lighter topics such as a lack of swag in women's cuts & sizes. There is just so much more to say about this topic that I couldn't possibly get across in 140 characters. Luckily, I have my own personal sounding board here so I'm going to take advantage of it.

I had someone that I know tell me that women actually have it easier than men in terms of actually getting jobs in the game industry. I'd like to see some numbers to back up his statement. If in my experience in games, that has certainly not been the case for most applicants. I've seen female engineers judged with more scrutiny than male engineers because they're so out-of-the-ordinary and therefore must be under the microscope. I've seen women judged more harshly for being nervous when in an interview setting with 5+ men interviewing them. I've actually heard someone say "if we hire her and she dresses like that every day, she will be distracting" when the candidate wore a blazer and knee length pencil skirt to the interview. And just a month or so ago, some guy at the bar told me that his studio has zero women, that they've "tried to hire female artists but all they can draw is unicorns". But I'm not actually here to talk about that.

My own personal experience is a big fat #1reasonwhy. Granted, my actual entrance into the industry wasn't that interesting of a story. I applied, received a good recommendation from a friend, interviewed for the job, and was offered it along with relocation to California. The whole process took maybe 5-6 weeks in total. The interview process was terrifying — it consisted of a sit down interview with like 6-8 guys and then a luncheon with the whole team with only one other woman (who was an intern). In my first phone screen, I was asked if I would be comfortable working in an office full of men. At the time I thought it was a silly question and slightly offensive. But I know now that the person who asked (who is now someone I consider my greatest mentor in the industry) was aware of the inequalities and atmosphere and was looking out for me. This isn't something you have to ask a male potential candidate.

On paper, my career probably looks pretty good. 5 acquisitions in 4 years, I've quickly moved up from Community Manager to Product Manager, to Producer, to Studio Director. Professionally I've done well for myself, but it hasn't been a breeze. I put a game face on because it's actually damaging to your career to talk about how things aren't as perfect for you as they seem. But I've progressed *despite* the issues I've experienced, not because the game industry is a great place for women to flourish.

When I got my first job in the game industry, a popular online MMO gaming forum that I used to participate in rallied against me. They started a flame war, claiming that I obviously slept my way into the industry. They Googled me, said awful things about my then-significant other. One of them I thought was my friend took some

of my MySpace pictures and distributed them, where they were Photoshopped into awful depictions and hurtful messages. They started up a website and started mocking everything I said online, translating each of my blog posts into their own trolling insults thrown at me. They even obtained my phone number and started calling me and leaving voicemails, so I had to change my phone number. They started threads insulting the products that I was working on, threatening to call my managers and expose the things I said as a teenager on the forum. They boycotted any game that I worked on. As an insecure teenager, I had sent someone a picture of myself in my bra — so, they exposed that too in a desperate attempt to shame me for my decision. I was so goddamn nervous that this risque picture of a 16 year old me would get back to my employers. Every day I was fearful of checking my email, of seeing what these people said. When I asked for my account on that forum to be removed and deleted, it was left intact yet I was banned from accessing it. To this day, if I try to log in (out of curiosity, certainly not to post there) it says something to the effect of “maybe you shouldn’t have been such an attention-seeking slut who lies about her age, then your tits wouldn’t be all over our website.”

I’d like to say I was strong and completely ignored it, but it was hard. I ended up shutting down my gaming blog that helped secure my job in the first place, because the comments I received from them were so hurtful that I’d cry when I checked my pending comments. Getting my job in the industry was actually the easiest part of the past 5 years for me. It’s everything that happens afterward that tests your emotional capability and makes you question everything every single day. It’s even worse when your own parents made you feel stupid for taking the job in the first place, for wasting time on a career that will get you nowhere. There were points where it didn’t feel like working in games was worth the disappointment that I felt from my own family. And it’s bad when you start to believe the trolls; that maybe you really aren’t good at your job. Maybe the only reason you got in was in fact because of your boobs. It’s hard to go to work every day and do good work when you’re concerned that you don’t deserve to be there.

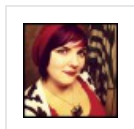
I tend to be good at forging alliances and saying the right thing, and I think it’s part of the reason I’ve been promoted in the industry. Sometimes the person saying some incredibly inappropriate and sexist shit has been my boss. And saying something would have meant I was no longer in favor, no longer on their good side. It’s easy to say that women need to speak up when being harassed at work, but it’s far more difficult when your career is on the line. When it might mean that you’re first to be laid off, or that you’ll be passed up for that promotion you’ve been hoping for.

I’d be doing the industry a disservice though if I didn’t talk at least briefly about the good stuff. My god is it freaking amazing to create games. To have a hand in something that so many people will experience, to know that you’re creating a meaningful experience that will bring someone joy and emotion. To work in a field that you feel so passionate about that you go home and continue to immerse yourself in. There are some truly amazing mentors who can seriously change your outlook and your trajectory. One particularly awesome boss of mine sat me down and told me that he felt like I was someone who could go in a number of different ways, that I was doing great, and that I had such potential. As someone brand new to the industry who looked up to this person, it felt like such a relief to hear that I wasn’t as lost as I felt. He asked me where I wanted to go in my career, and wanted to help me get there. If the game industry had mentors and allies like this available to every woman who entered it, we’d all be in much better shape. I’m not sure where I’d be now if it weren’t for him. I was lucky — most women don’t have people like that in their studio, and that’s just downright sad.

The #1reasonwhy hashtag is important, because it’s showing that our experiences aren’t just our own. Scrolling

through and nodding in agreement with these other women: that is a powerful moment that no one can take away. Knowing you're not alone, that you're not overreacting. Solidarities can move mountains. First we band together, then we scheme, then we do something. I'm focusing on changing things every day from the inside, but I can't do it alone. It's exhausting, it's emotional, and gut-wrenching. To this day, I'm still concerned that the mistake of my past will come back to haunt me, and that picture will resurface and end up humiliating me even further. I was ashamed, and I'm still ashamed. But at least now I know that I didn't deserve the treatment that I received for it. I'm finally at a point in my career where I'm not worried that my income will be sabotaged by internet trolls. And I have a great support group of fellow women in the industry who understand what it feels like to be treated differently.

My #1reasonwhy is because every single day you're one conversation away from being unsure. Unsure if you really belong. That you deserve to be there. Unsure that you achieved what you got because of hard work. Unsure if you should remain quiet or speak out, and unsure if you can handle another bit of contradicting advice telling you what to do. Unsure if you have a real future in games. Unsure if people aren't talking about you behind your back, about what you're wearing, about your decisions because of your gender. But I'm also willing to be a #1reasonmentor because I know how transformative it is to have a strong ally to stand with you and tell you that they're sure you're heading the right direction.



#### About Tami Baribeau

Lead Editor and co-founder of The Border House, feminist, gamer, lover of social media, technology, and virtual worlds. Pansexual, equestrian, dog lover, social game studio director and producer. Email me [here](#) and follow me [on Twitter](#)! [View all posts by Tami Baribeau →](#)

This entry was posted in [General Gaming](#) and tagged [1reasonwhy](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

## 18 Responses to My More-Than-#1ReasonWhy



**Doone** says:

November 27, 2012 at 6:49 pm

Thanks for sharing your story. I'm really happy for all of us, but especially for women, for busting down these walls that we (men) have been holding up to keep you out. I think when more women are in the industry, games will finally be taken to the next level.



**Doug S.** says:

November 27, 2012 at 7:03 pm

<3



**John L.** says:

November 27, 2012 at 7:34 pm

I know it's not much, and I sure as hell wasn't there and don't participate in this sort of behavior, but I feel like I should say "I'm sorry" for maybe at least one of the people who acted like this.

I'm sorry that people treat other people this way, and I'm sorry that the simple request to treat people of all flavors like actual human beings is such a polarizing topic of discussion. I don't know what I can do, but I try my best to set a good example.

So.

I'm sorry.

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Pingback: [i think we need our very own WOMEN IN GAMES thread - Wasting Your Life](#)

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**Fin Alyn** says:

November 27, 2012 at 8:00 pm

I'm not in the game industry, but I think I can speak for many industries when I say, it's not just women being harassed, but what are often perceived as feminine values, regardless of which gender is displaying them. The clear move of my Top 50 Fortune 500 company in the last decade for middle management has been to promote the jerks, the hard line butt kissers, and anybody who takes an antagonistic approach to the lowest level workers in the company and the customers they deal with daily. There is so little appreciation for the individual and an utter lack of compassion it's frightening. I imagine it's even more so for women, because the extra added dimension of gender harassment (if not sexual harassment) cuts so straight to the core of who that person is.

I've long felt that directing more girls and young women toward the sciences would help make small ripples and as more and more poured into the field, larger ripples as time goes on. I still feel that way, but I'm not sure if the corporate culture isn't changing to the point that "asshat" isn't a major qualification for entry into the corporate management structure, regardless of gender. If so, I sadly can see the same words in a decade coming from a female boss to a woman in the gaming field.



**Dave Fried** says:

November 28, 2012 at 7:26 am

Regarding asshattery in the corporate hierarchy, studies have shown that having women in upper management makes a company more successful. I think a lot of that is the ability of women to curb the naked aggression and testosterone that tends to characterize highly ambitious men.

The thing is, we're embarking on a grand experiment now because there are finally a sizable number of companies that have *any women at all* at the top. So if companies without a culture of asshattery are more successful, simple law of the jungle states they'll win and the companies full of douche will fail, and overall corporate culture will change as a result.

At least that's what I hope will happen.



**Zoya** says:

November 29, 2012 at 7:30 am

I don't know whether this is what you meant, but I kind of disagree with the notion that women have innate qualities that soften the cut-throat corporate world. If the most successful execs are currently aggressive males, it seems likely that the most successful female execs are also aggressive. The presence of women does not automatically make a culture more nurturing and kind.

Also, I'm also not sure that "testosterone" is a determinant of competitive success in the work place. If it was, wouldn't most "ambitious" men be slathering themselves with AndroGel every night?



**Katie** says:

November 27, 2012 at 8:14 pm

\*hugs\* I feel really lucky to work with you, Tami. I hope that maybe this is a turning point in the game industry and that my generation will be the one that sees equality in the game industry because of our brave predecessors like you.



**welshtroll** says:

November 28, 2012 at 12:20 am

Thank you for sharing your experiences, it must have been difficult to write.

The great thing that the #1reasonwhy hashtag has done is to broadened peoples knowledge of how things are for those enduring it. I know that I have come away with a new found/ enhanced respect for many of those sharing their stories.

The mentality of communities and workplaces that often hinders women will eventually corrode away as level-head people replace those with misguided/biased/malicious judgements.



**Simon** says:

November 28, 2012 at 2:26 am

Wow. This blew my mind! First off, absolute kudos to you for sticking with it and becoming as successful as you have despite these awful setbacks. Secondly, it simply amazes me how those people who gave you so much hurt can be so horrible and idiotic!

Do they not realise how they are not only being extremely hurtful and prejudice to others but they are also bringing the reputation of the industry down and other, good people who work in it, by association?!

So I tip my hat to you, fantastic post. This is the kind of thing that everyone should be much more aware of and is more than worthy of several retweets, which is what I shall do right now!



**Dave Fried** says:

November 28, 2012 at 7:28 am

Your story is uplifting despite what you've had to go through.

Sometimes I wish I was still in the games industry so that I could help change the culture. I know so much more about being an ally now than I did then.



**TK Games** says:

November 28, 2012 at 7:37 am

I know how you feel about your parents not really accepting your career path and viewing that it will go nowhere. I am really terrified of what my parents will say when I tell them that instead of looking for a new job (just got laid off) that I want to work full time on the video game my dev group is creating. They have never approved of me playing videogames in the first place, viewing it as a child's past time and something I need to grow out of. Truth is that my co founder and I (we have been best buds since age 2) have wanted to start our own studio since we were kids. I am young enough to be able to take those risks.

As a male I can't really speak for what you are going through. I can speak to the incredible abilities of our studio's artist, who draws anything BUT unicorns. She has so much talent and I am really glad I am friends with her (since 2nd grade). Luckily she has not had to experience the sexism that comes with the games industry. I do know that if our studio takes off, I will never allow that kind of thing to happen. I count on my artist to tell me if an idea is stupid and she keeps my ideas in perspective. Her perspective as a woman is invaluable to me. There have been countless times she has corrected me on my ideas and I take her critiques to heart. As a dev team leader it is important to consider EVERYONE'S ideas and critiques. It is sad that a lot of female developers don't have that voice in planning meetings. Everyone should have a say in what they are creating and not be pigeon holed into drawing unicorns.



**Bethany** says:

November 28, 2012 at 8:39 am

Is it ridiculous that I came here to contact you and not through Twitter because I'm afraid of all the \*sideways stares\* I'll get from my guy friends?

Absolutely.

Thank you for taking the time to write this. And if you're still looking for someone to mentor, I'm completely in. It's been my dream to walk right into this industry and while I'm more on the art side of things, I'm trying to broaden my skill set.

Twitter – @PMS\_BONELY. I'm not sure how mentors work.. but I'd love to chat. Or we could talk about food. I make a mean bread pudding with rum sauce. 😊

<3 Thank you, again, for writing this.



**UnSubject** says:

November 28, 2012 at 9:40 pm

Congrats on only reading the first line of the article before commenting, Luca78.

Pingback: [Unsure | 1 Reason Why](#)



**rho** says:

November 30, 2012 at 12:04 pm

I have had this tab open since you made the post, trying to figure out how to articulate precisely what I want to say in response to this. Unfortunately, words have failed me, so I shall just say this: This is very powerfully written; thank you for sharing it.



**Alyx** says:

December 1, 2012 at 7:45 pm

" Knowing you're not alone, that you're not overreacting..... Unsure if you really belong"

Thank you for writing this.

There are days when I am genuinely terrified about entering the industry but things like this make me hopeful and make me think I actually have a future as a games designer.

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Pingback: [#1ReasonWhy: Thoughts and Link Round-Up | Acid for Blood](#)

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